



STATE OF WASHINGTON
COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS
COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS HISPANOS

SPOKANE
Public Meeting Minutes
May 22, 2004

Roll Call:

Commissioners present: Leo Gaeta, Yvonne Lopez-Morton, Karla Padilla-Reyna, Gabriel Banfi, Uriel Iñiguez, Diana Avalos, Gabriel Portugal, and Faviola Barbosa

Commissioners absent: Homero Tamez (excused), and Rebecca Villareal (excused)

Staff present: Cindy García

Meeting called to order at 9:12 a.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Commissioner Portugal made a motion to approve the minutes from the Pasco public meeting minutes. Commissioner Banfi seconded the motion. **Minutes approved unanimously.**

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Before delivering the Executive Director report, the public was informed of that the Director had requested a leave of absence for six months to work on a personal interest project. Effective May 17, 2004, Antonio M. Ginatta will be on leave through approximately November 15, 2004. The Governor's office has approved this and is working on appointing an interim director during this time, and is planning on having a press release and decision made by June 1st.

Executive Director Report:

A financial report was provided verbally to the Chair, Fiscal Year ends June 30th. The budget for next year is being developed in a draft form and will be circulated to the Commissioners when completed. The Executive Director also provided a transition plan, which was discussed in the study session meeting. When the Acting Director comes on board he/she will be briefed on items that are pending.

Committee Reports:

Education Committee – Commissioner Avalos:

- Reported that the committee is focusing on the prevailing issue of drop out of Latino students at the secondary level.
- Senate Bill 6268, considering ethnicity in higher education institutions for admission.
- WASL retakes, small issues in other communities in regards to education.

Emergent Issues Committee – Commissioner Banfi:

- Reported on the preparation of the annual report: health care disparity/language access/racial profiling/pesticide poisoning/immigration issue/DREAM act.

Economic Development – Chair Gaeta reporting on behalf of Commissioner Villareal:

- The committee is focusing on a small business summit on the west side. Starting in the fall the committee will develop a work seminar throughout the state; the topics are yet to be determined. Focused on working with different agencies that provide resources to small businesses.

Personnel Committee – Commissioner Morton-Lopez:

- Recruitment to fill a Commissioner Vacancy. 19 applications received. There are no limits on geographical area, but this year the message was that the Commission was looking for someone with law enforcement background. Top three candidates are being forwarded to the Governor's office for selection. All three candidates do have law enforcement background.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

In the last public meeting, Commissioners requested clarification on minutes where the Governor provided to Commission direction on working with federal level issues that impact minority communities at the local level. The Governor stated that he expected the Commissioners to work not only on issues affecting these populations at the local and state level but also on a federal level. The wording on the minutes was confusing. Commissioners requested clarification in the minutes in case it becomes an issue in the future. This has been corrected and the minutes are posted on the Commission website.

The Commissioners had asked the Executive Director to write a position statement regarding issues facing the Latino community on the federal level. One issue is on immigration reform and the other is on the DREAM Act. Executive Director Ginatta wrote proclamations to state the Commission's concerns to the congressional delegation. Chair Gaeta read the proclamations (see addendum 1 & 2).

Commissioner Morton-Lopez made a motion to approve resolution statements as written. Commissioner Avalos and Commissioner Iñiguez seconded the notion. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Action Item: Executive Assistant will formalize resolution statement and send out to Commissioners and media.

Annual Report:

At this time the various committees have done work to develop input for their portion of the annual report. Committees are to submit input by June 4th. Report will be completed by June 30th.

NEW BUSINESS

According to the Commission's Strategic P, an item that was identified was to organize a Latino Legislative Day. Commissioners discussed several options to organize this event. One of these options included partnering with other entities in the state to make this possible. One organization would be LEAP. The other option that was discussed was to do a survey of Latino agencies that would be willing to partner with the Commission.

Commissioner Iñiguez stated that the first step would be to find out how the community feels.

Chair Gaeta agreed with Commissioner Iñiguez supporting that we get a better perspective and that a survey be done on how much support will be provided by other organizations. The Commission does not have enough financial as well as staff resources to accomplish this event alone.

Commissioner Banfi agreed and suggested the Commission contact LEAP to see if they are going to put on some sort of Legislative Day and see if we can partner up with them, if not, we can do the survey and prepare for 2006.

Commissioner Banfi suggested we put this item on the July study session agenda.

Agenda was modified to accommodate Representative Nethercutt.

GUEST SPEAKERS

George Nethercutt – United States House of Representatives, District 5

Representative Nethercutt congratulated all of the Commissioners for raising the issues that concern the Hispanic and Latino Community because it affects all of us.

Representative Nethercutt spoke about HR 3722. Congressman Rohrabacher of California proposed legislation that would require hospitals to ask immigrant patients if their legal documents were in order before rendering services. If they were not in order, the hospital staff would be required to call immigration. The bill was defeated. The representative stated there is a need to modify laws and make it easier for people to come to the country legally. Also stated that there needs to be educational opportunities to assist those who don't have English as a first language.

Representative Nethercutt stated the work the Commission is doing is valuable. Spoke about the importance of the mission of the Commission, what it is trying to do to enhance the status of Latinos.

Q: Commissioner Portugal asked if there were legislation that would provide unemployment benefits would you support that?

A: Representative Nethercutt responded by saying he has already cosponsored legislation that addressed this issue.

Chair Gaeta stated that the Commission looks forward to working with Representative Nethercutt.

CONINUATION OF NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Portugal raised the issue of changing of the dates for the Joint Commission meeting. Typically this meeting occurs in January/February and it's difficult to get with legislators as they are in the middle of the session. Consideration is moving this event during November or December when legislators meet for committee work.

Commissioner Banfi would just like to have more specifics on the dates on the record for these committee meetings during November or early December to determine which date would be more effective before rescheduling this Joint Commission meeting.

Chair Gaeta replied that dates will be researched to see when it is more effective to have this meeting. Office staff will research the dates and present for discussion during next commission meeting.

GUEST SPEAKERS CONTINUED

Beverly Austin – School Social Worker

She stated school social workers are very important jobs, linking families with school district providing better access. Addressed health care disparities in District 3. Stated that District 3 is one of the poorest of Washington State, has the highest levels of unemployment, challenges in the schools and a lot of the population moves. Concerned about access to health care for the population.

Chair Gaeta stated that Ms. Austin raised some issues that are not just unique in the Spokane area. Health care and education opportunities - those are problems in most communities. Lack of coverage in health care and access to health care. The Commission works to address those issues.

Wilma Cartagena – Co Founder of El Centro de Spokane

Wilma thanked the Commissioners for holding a meeting in Spokane. She then gave a brief overview of how El Centro started. El Centro began as a resource center from a meeting Cartagena had with Maria Alvarez-Gaines, and Troy Gaines. They started El Centro with \$15 in a bank account and have not yet found consistent funding. The mission of El Centro is to advocate, educate, and provide access to information and referrals to the Latino community in Spokane. The goals of El Centro are to educate the community (Latino and mainstream), to open doors by facilitating initial contact between agencies and members of the Latino community with limited English skills, and to provide educational resources to facilitate the integration of the Latino community into the mainstream.

Ms. Cartagena asked the Commission to help El Centro address their needs and concerns by believing and becoming a supporter of El Centro. To be a strong voice in Olympia to help other understand that even though Spokane may not have the largest number of Hispanics in Washington state it does not mean they do not need assistance. Continue the dialogue, keep El Centro informed, and lastly to help El Centro celebrate their communities. There are no paid positions at El Centro. There is a volunteer pool of about 20 people who can be called on special occasions and there is a full board of seven people.

Meeting adjourned for a break

Yvonne Montoya-Zamora- Vice President of the Spokane Hispanic Professional Business Association

Thanked the Commission for coming. Ms. Montoya-Zamora spoke about the annual graduation awards ceremony that took place on May 20th. Over 400 families attended. A total of 86 graduates were honored, representing over six colleges and most of the high schools in this area. This year, three scholarships were awarded, each in the amount of \$2,500. Ms. Montoya-Zamora stated she was disappointed because they had more money they could have granted in scholarships, what was lacking was students who applied for them. HPBA is going to make an effort to get the word out on the available scholarships.

HPBA is an advocate for education. House bill 1079 did a great job in getting our undocumented students to pay state tuition rates. We need to succeed further by having the Dream Act, student adjustment act, passed.

Irene Gonzales is working on letting high school counselors know that scholarships are available.

Discussion ensued on requirement for legal status and requirement of a social security number in order to receive scholarships. The Hispanic Scholarship Fund does ask for a social security number before issuing a check.

A member from the public asked what would happen if a student does use a phony social security number? What are the dangers in that? If they go to school with that?

Commissioner Banfi answered the question by stating that is a federal offense, under immigration law to claim on a document that you are a US citizen, when you are not.

Cheryl Hanks – Nurse in the Pesticide Surveillance Program, Washington State Department of Health

She talked about the survey that was conducted on the health of people. Hanks explained she is to review all the information gathered about occupational and non-occupational pesticide exposures across the state. Generally that's 300 cases a year. The surveillance program looks at acute affects, such as skin, eyes, and breathing. They are starting to look seriously at chronic effects.

Cholinesterase monitoring is conducted by taking blood from people who have worked out in the fields so they can look at what the cholinesterase level is. Cholinesterase is an enzyme in your

body that goes down when you are exposed to pesticides. When a person is exposed to certain pesticides the cholinesterase level goes down.

Chair Gaeta informed that the Commission has done some work on this area. The Commission provided strong support and testified on it.

There was a concern from the public regarding the results of the testing. Wanted to know if it is just a monitoring piece, and when would action take place. Jose Rodriguez from L&I stated that the first series of the test results are back; 3,200 workers and growers were tested and 45% percent of those came back as depressed. Of those 45%, 80 workers and 52 growers were represented. The work practices of the growers are monitored. A worker is removed from work when pesticide exposure is at 30% depression. The good thing about cholesterane it regenerates naturally.

Mr. Rodriguez explained that when a worker is removed because of pesticides it is the grower's responsibility to find that worker another job for the worker at a guaranteed salary. If the worker starts to show chronic results, they are encouraged to file a claim and go through the workers compensation process.

Ben Cabildo – Executive Director African-American, Hispanic, Asian and Native Americans (AHANA)

Welcomed the Commissioners to Spokane and also the leaders who have been very active in making a difference in the community. The theme for the presentation was “we are not waiting anymore”. Gave a brief history of how AHANA was established.

AHANA's mission, commitment and passion make a difference in the community. The mission of AHANA is to improve the economic status and the quality of life of the African American, Hispanic, Asian and Native American businesses and professionals in the area. Developed the AHANA program to match the needs of the community.

Mr. Cabildo stated that AHANA would not be successful if it were not for the community. The Mayor, the economic development council or the state cannot organize anything that pertains to economic development without contacting AHANA to represent the minority businesses.

Andrew Holquin – Community Advocate

Mr. Holquin discussed the different organizations he works for and the many causes. Discussed the concerns people are having in regards to the WASL test. Started a tutoring program at the School of Education at Gonzaga University. In the pilot program there were kids from the 3rd, 4th and 5th grades. Fall program starts in October and all grades will be taken. Tutor in reading and in math and this is all free.

Created an Eastern Washington Coalition for Juvenile Justice. Identified some grant money, about \$7.5 million, will have supplemental educational services, mentoring, tutoring, community gang intervention, juvenile advocacy, and drug and alcohol counseling.

Chair Gaeta it's good to see that there are resources in Spokane. Thanked Mr. Holquin for his presentation.

A public comment was made in regards to undocumented juveniles being sent to Martin Hall in Medical Lake.

Antonio Ginatta stated that there is a working group working on the undocumented juvenile issue, Columbia Legal Services has taken the lead.

Chair Gaeta asked Mr. Ginatta to give a quick summary of the situation.

Mr. Ginatta stated that the Commission got involved because the police began to report juveniles to INS. Juveniles were being rounded up and reported to INS before charges were filled. The other issue was the treatment of the use of illegal juvenile children as bait to bring in undocumented parents.

Martin Hall is a maximum-security facility. The community can bring this issue to light by contacting media to raise awareness.

A member from the public asked if the juvenile issue was a function of the Commission. Mr. Ginatta stated that the Commission is an advisory board. In situations such as these, the Commission needs to take a step back and let legal services handle it.

The public was asked if there were any other comments/questions/suggestions.

Meeting adjourned 12:52 p.m.

ADDENDUM 1

WHEREAS, the education of our children is the great equalizer;

WHEREAS, many high achieving, academically outstanding Latino students are without options to legalize their immigration status;

WHEREAS, these students are members of our community, are American in every sense, have built their lives in our country and strive to succeed in the United States;

WHEREAS, these students are the untapped positive potential of our country;

LET IT BE RESOLVED that the Commission officially recognize the challenges these students face, their drive and dedication, and that the Commission advise our Congressional delegation to support the DREAM Act, to provide an avenue for legalization for students who have graduated from high school in the US, have resided for several years in our country, and who call the United States home.

ADDENDUM 2

WHEREAS, the United States is a country rich with a history of immigrant contribution, dedication, and sacrifice;

WHEREAS, Latino immigrants risk their lives to cross the border to work in under-appreciated, low-paying, and often dangerous jobs;

WHEREAS, the economy of our country, particularly the agricultural industry, depends on the work of Latino undocumented immigrants;

WHEREAS, current immigration policy divides families, stifles the rights of workers, drives communities underground; and threatens the overall health of our country;

LET IT BE RESOLVED that the Commission advise our Congressional delegation on the necessity of a comprehensive immigration reform, a reform that addresses the barriers faced by all immigrants to our country, the recently-arrived, the long-term resident, and those to come in the future; the farmworker and the non-farmworker; the families of immigrants that reside within the United States and those outside the United States; and a reform that recognizes the dignity of work, and protects the immigrant worker and family just as all other workers are protected.